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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 09/27/07

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ARTICLES:

- (1) Ambassadors of 11 countries discuss the question of extending Japan's Antiterrorism Special Measures Law

The ambassadors of 11 countries, including the United States, which have deployed their forces in the Indian Ocean, this morning gathered together at the Pakistani Ambassador's Residence at Shoto in Shibuya Ward, Tokyo, and discussed measures to persuade Japan to continue its refueling mission. By emphasizing the importance of international unity, they urged Japan to continue its Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling operations and issued a joint statement expressing appreciation for Japan's refueling activities carried out to date.

Those who participated in the gathering included ambassadors of the US, Britain, Germany, France, Australia, Italy, Canada, Greece, New Zealand, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

The statement said: "Japan has made amazing and essential contributions in the area of refueling, which decides on the fate of Operation Enduring Freedom. It has contributed to peace and stability in Afghanistan and international efforts to promote prosperity." Referring to recently-adopted United Nations Security Council Resolution 1776, the statement added: "Allies have understood, deeply appreciated, and hope for Japan's assistance."

On the rumor that the MSDF might have refueled US vessels involved in combats in Iraq, US Ambassador to Japan J. Thomas Schieffer denied it, noting: "There has been no trace of such refueling."

(2) Editorial -- Six-party talks: Tangible progress on nuclear and abduction issues desirable

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SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
September 27, 2007

The six-party talks to discuss the North Korean nuclear issue are to restart in Beijing on Sept. 27 and hold the first plenary session since this past March. The session will give the first occasion to Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's just launched administration to face North Korea. Also, the session will test the administration's ability to deal with the nuclear and abduction issues.

A major focus of the upcoming meeting is to set a specific roadmap for implementing the "next-phase action" leading to complete nuclear disablement.

According to US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, the US chief delegate to the six-party talks, the plenary session will receive a report from a group of experts from the United States, China, and Russia on the results of their inspections of nuclear facilities in North Korea. Following the report, the participants will discuss progress at each of five working groups held in the summer.

Based on the results of the discussions, a process for disabling major nuclear facilities, including (1) the graphite-moderated nuclear reactor in Yongbyon, (2) the reprocessing facility, and (3) the facility for the production of fuel rods will be sealed in a bid to prevent the total amount of nuclear-bomb-grade plutonium estimated at about 50 kg at present from increasing. On the reporting of nuclear programs, the session will call on the North to disclose its uranium enrichment program, which has not been made clear in the past, and aim to disable it, too.

The United States appears to be motivated by its desire to facilitate disablement before the end of the year in order to pave the way for nuclear dismantlement next year. One concern in this regard is a growing possibility that the US will remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism in an easygoing manner as called for by the North.

Whether the North will honestly carry out its pledge to completely dismantle nuclear weapons and programs still remains an open

question. Recently the media reported that North Korea is suspected of having cooperated with Syria in developing nuclear weapons and missiles. On the question of disablement, as well, nothing has been decided, such as who will be responsible for the actual process and how to share the cost.

Should the US government decide to delist North Korea at this point in time, that could simply have an adverse impact on a resolution of the abduction issue involving Japanese nationals and could also affect the Japan-US alliance. The Fukuda administration's capabilities will be tested in this connection.

Fukuda expressed his enthusiasm, saying, "I'd like to resolve the abduction issue myself," but some have expressed concern that Fukuda may prioritize "dialogue over pressure" in contrast to the former Abe administration. Japan should not easily make concessions on the question of whether to extend its own sanctions taken since last fall against North Korea, such as a ban on North Korean ships, including the Man Gyong Bong, calling at Japanese ports. We hope to see the government's strong determination to move both the nuclear and abduction issues forward while working in close cooperation with

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the US, as well as the government's strategy for that end.

(3) Back-against-the-wall cabinet: Switch from Abe policy gathering steam

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
September 27, 2007

The Fukuda cabinet was formally launched on the evening of Sept. 27. His secretary reported to Fukuda, who was working in his office at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei), "It appears that cabinet approval ratings in opinion polls conducted by various dailies are around 60 PERCENT ." Fukuda replied with a smile, "Oh, really. We have to live up to public expectations."

Fukuda was elected prime minister amid growing distrust in politics caused by the pension record-keeping errors, politics and money scandals, and the subsequent defeat of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the Upper House election, which led to Shjinzo Abe's sudden resignation.

It was Fukuda himself who dubbed his cabinet the "against-the-wall cabinet" in a press conference held after the formation of the cabinet on the evening of September 25, because he was acutely alarmed about the idea that even one single mistake could cause the LDP to lose power.

On the policy front, Fukuda is beginning to adjust the radical reform initiative carried on by the Koizumi and Abe administrations. Policy Research Council Chairman Tanigaki, who supported Fukuda in the LDP presidential election, stressed, "We must make a policy shift so that attention will be given to the downside of structural reforms."

Supporters of Fukuda held policy talks in a Tokyo hotel on Sept. 15, when Fukuda announced his candidacy for the presidential election. A number of participants called for measures for those in vulnerable positions. Policies to put on hold such measures as an increase in medical copayments by the elderly and a reduction in child allowances for single-mother families, were adopted immediately. Fukuda's public pledges also incorporated measures to revitalize local economies.

The shift from the Koizumi and Abe policies is a change in the political situation caused by the LDP's devastating defeat in the Upper House election. Structural changes are also gathering steam. An increasing number of members of the New Komeito and its power base Soka Gakkai now take the position that if they join hands only with the LDP, they will lose support or that they should look into non-cabinet tie-ups.

The New Komeito in the power-sharing talks with the LDP strongly called for an increase in welfare-related spending. The policy

agreements the two parties reached on the 25th included promoting the deployment of medical helicopters, strengthening assistance for child-rearing, including improved child allowances, nursery services and assistance to pregnant women, and considering a drastic review of the Disabled Persons Self-Help Assistance Law.

Realizing those measures needs a considerable amount of financial resources. The government incorporated a policy of cutting social security outlays by 1.1 trillion yen over five years starting in

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fiscal 2007 in the basic policy guidelines on economic and fiscal management and structural reforms adopted last July. However, a switch from this policy is bound to occur.

In addition, due to the trading of places between the ruling and opposition camps in the Upper House, the Japanese government has become a divided government in which the DPJ holds the key to realizing policies, according to Tokyo University Professor Akihiko Tanaka. The Fukuda administration is strapped with a structural problem, that is to say, it cannot pass bills into law without the DPJ's cooperation.

Many take the view that if the New Komeito and the DPJ both attach importance to measures on social security and social disparities, the government might resort to a strategy of scattering about pork-barrel largesse.

On the diplomatic front, Fukuda categorically said that he would not visit Yasukuni Shrine and that he would give weight to dialogue in dealing with North Korea. He also stressed a stance of holding talks with the DPJ regarding the issue of continuing the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operation for US vessels that are engaging in antiterror operations in the Indian Ocean, though prospects for such talks have yet to be secured.

How will Fukuda make a policy switch smoothly, while avoiding negative impacts? Since the thorny path remains unchanged since under the Abe administration, his ability as prime minister will be tested.

(4) Education Minister Tokai says he returned donations, calling suspicions regrettable

ASAHI Online (Full)
13:34, September 27, 2007

In connection with allegations that the Liberal Democratic Party Hyogo Prefecture No. 10 Electoral Branch headed by Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology Minister Kisaburo Tokai received 1 million yen each in donations from a construction company undertaking a national public works project on the day and the day before the public announcements of the 2003 and 2005 Lower House elections, Tokai indicated earlier today that the branch has returned a total of 2.9 million in donations to the company. The education minister explained the reason this way: "My perception is that the donations were not violations of the Public Offices Election Law, but it was regrettable that suspicions arose. I therefore ordered the branch to return the money to clear its name."

In responding to questions at the Education Ministry, Tokai said to the press: "Closely associating with the company for two generations, I have received assistance from it regularly." He also explained that the branch had received from the company a total of 1.3 million yen in donations in 2003 and 1.6 million yen in 2005.

The Public Offices Election Law prohibits companies in contract with the central government making donations in connection with national elections and candidates receiving donations.

(5) Defense Minister Ishiba describes current government's Futenma relocation plan as ideal, points out difficulties in offshore

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relocation

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)
September 27, 2007

At a press briefing yesterday after the just launched Fukuda cabinet's first meeting, Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba referred to the possibility of constructing a planned V-shaped airstrip offshore as called for by Okinawa Prefecture and Nago City regarding the relocation of the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and indicated there would be difficulties in doing so, noting: "I think the present plan is ideal. There is no change in the central government's way of thinking that (the current plan) will not be modified unless there is any rational reason."

At the same time, Ishiba said, "I don't intend to turn a deaf ear to local voices. As a minister in charge, I want to have a proper perception about what are real local voices and how (airplanes) will actually fly." Ishiba thus underlined his intention to make efforts to know firsthand the desires of Okinawa Prefecture and Nago City and have a good grip of an operating plan for an alternative facility.

Additionally, Ishiba mentioned that "The military bases cannot exist without local understanding and cooperation. Local understanding is of great importance for the continuation of the Japan-US alliance. The central government "absolutely should not make local residents feel 'the central government lacks sincerity in doing it.'"

Referring to the Consultative Council on Futenma, which has not met since January of this year, Ishiba explained: "The council should meet as quickly as possible. The central government is responsible for setting the stage for the council to reopen. State Minister in Charge of Okinawa Fumio Kishida and I are responsible for doing so." Ishiba thus indicated his intention to restart the council as quickly as possible while working together with Kishida.

Former Defense Minister Masahiko Komura, at a ceremony for him to leave the Defense Ministry to assume the post of foreign minister ahead of Ishiba arriving at the post of defense minister, said this about the Futenma relocation plan: "(The relocation plan) is a key to implementing the US force realignment plans." He then added: "The important thing is to keep trust relations with municipalities and residents. I hope the central government, in line with the Japan-US agreement, will give a detailed account of its views to local residents, listen to local views, hold discussion with the locals in all sincerity, and realize the relocation as swiftly as possible."

(6) Japanese tanker attacked by suicide terrorists

SANKEI (Page 1) (Abridged)
September 27, 2007

NYK Line's 280,000-ton tanker Takasuzu transports crude oil from the Persian Gulf to Japan through via the Indian Ocean.

Oil tankers are vital for Japan, which imports 90 percent of its crude oil from the Middle East. Oil from the Middle East has been supporting the Japanese economy, producing electricity, and running automobiles.

What if such tankers were attacked by terrorists in the sea lanes

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coming from the Middle East? Japan's energy supply would dry up and the Japanese economy would suffer a devastating blow from it, resulting in an oil crisis

The Takasuzu in fact came under a terrorist attack in waters off Basra, Iraq, in the Persian Gulf and narrowly escaped sinking. It was the US-led coalition forces in the Persian Gulf that interdicted the terrorist attack against the Takasuzu.

According to the British naval vessel Norfolk's operational logbook, an oil shipping terminal became the target of suicide attacks by

small high-speed boats on April 24, 2004. Although damage to the terminal was slight, the Takasuzu docked at the port suffered serious damage.

A coalition forces vessel spotted the three suspicious high-speed boats approaching and exchanged fire with them. One of them exploded several hundred meters away from the Takasuzu.

The NYK Line Tokyo head office received a radio message saying that the Takasuzu had been attacked, sending shockwaves through the company. At around the same time, the Defense Agency Defense Intelligence Headquarters also received information on the incident.

The tanker's hull was riddled with bullets and an iron door was blown away. Moreover, two US navy personnel and one Coast Guard sailor were killed in the incident. Although the terrorist attack was interdicted, the incident took a heavy human toll.

Several days later, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who is connected with the Al Qaeda, issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack. They think attacks on tankers would boost oil prices and that would deal a serious blow to the major Western powers.

Some 40-50 Japanese tankers, including those of NYK Line, the operator of the Takasuzu, are cruising in the Persian Gulf at any given moment. NYK Line safe environment group chief Hiroshi Sekine said: "Without protection by the coalition forces, the tankers cannot go near waters off Basra."

Meanwhile, 90 PERCENT of the Iraqi national budget comes from oil exports. Use of such terminals is essential for the reconstruction of Iraq.

In the wake of the Takasuzu incident, the coalition forces have set up a 3,000-meter alert zone in the port that is closed to unauthorized regular vessels. The security of this area is vital not only for the oil importing countries, such as Japan, but also for Iraq, the supplier, as well.

The coalition forces are engaged in the war on terrorism from the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean with the aim of interdicting maritime terrorism.

Tight legal restrictions do not allow Japan to send Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels to the "battle zone" in the Persian Gulf. Given the situation, MSDF supply vessels have been refueling naval vessels of the multinational forces in the Indian Ocean. In addition, because the MSDF is not allowed to directly root out maritime terrorism, Japan has to rely on other countries in defending its tankers.

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The MSDF refueling operations have been based on the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. Opposition parties are opposing the law's extension, saying the government is not allowed to send troops to places irrelevant to the security of Japan.

The Takasuzu incident has proved that waters in the Persian Gulf directly concern Japan. MSDF supply vessels have been supporting the war on terrorism and also protecting the economic artery that is directly connected with Japan's national interests at the same time.

MSDF personnel have been dutifully providing ship-to-ship refueling services in the Indian Ocean under the scorching sun. Japan's departure from the Indian Ocean is likely to force the Pakistani vessels to leave the area, as they are heavily dependent on fuel from the MSDF. Such a development might unnecessarily harm the Japan-US alliance as well.

Touching on the possibility of MSDF withdrawal, the British economic daily Financial Times said on Sept. 13 that "this is not bushido; this is being chicken." Japan's departure would take a toll on other countries, and that would seem like fleeing from the enemy lines.

The countries that have sent ground troops to the coalition forces think Japan's Antiterrorism Law is taken political hostage in the country. The latest Newsweek issue cynically reported that Japan's irresponsible politics is being booed by other countries. At least the United States has the tradition that partisan interests connected with national security must be stopped at the water's edge. Both the Republicans and Democrats avoid clashing head-on by giving top priority to defending the country in the event of a national contingency.

That is the right thing to do. As seen in the Takasuzu incident, the Japanese public must not forget that the country's economy is founded on the sacrifices of the coalition forces, including the United States.

The UN Security Council adopted on Sept. 19 a resolution extending the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan that also included words of appreciation for Japan's refueling operations. Japan's operations are being highly appreciated out of proportion of its risks.

As of Sept. 26, the Takasuzu is cruising west in the Arabian Sea north of the Indian Ocean where the MSDF remains on alert. The tanker is expected to arrive in the Persian Gulf in several days.

NYK Line's Sekine fears that the Japanese tankers would become defenseless after the Antiterrorism Law expires. He said: "The tankers must pass through even dangerous areas. If possible, I would like to see MSDF vessels give protection to the tankers in the Persian Gulf, but that's not possible, so my understanding is that they are engaged in refueling operations in the Indian Ocean."

It is near impossible to root out terrorism, aggression, and intimidations from the international community. If Japan self-servingly decides to leave the Indian Ocean, that would be tantamount to forcing other countries to assume the risks and burdens.

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(7) Leaks of harmful agents at Yokota Air Base: Whether to report and investigate incident depends on US military judgment

ASAHI (Page 37) (Full)
September 27, 2007

It has been found that a total of 90 cases of leakage of toxic materials, including jet fuel, occurred at Yokota Air Base or its affiliated facilities over the past seven years but that local government was notified of only one case. The local communities must be informed of the actual state of pollution and properly deal with the situation. Is there no impact on the environments around the base?

A team of lawyers in a lawsuit complaining aircraft noise at Yokota Air Base visited the Foreign Ministry in April and asked if no fault was found with the US military, which did not inform Japan of most of the incidents. An official responsible for matters related to the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) replied: "The US military, which has the authority to hand down a judgment, judged that the incidents would have no impact on the environment outside the base. There is no problem." This reply underscored the ministry's stance of leaving everything to the US military's discretion.

Under an agreement reached by the Japan-US Joint Committee, the US military is required to notify Japan of a spill incident that could cause pollution. The Foreign Ministry has no intention to work to review the agreement, with one official saying: "It is not true to interpret that everything should be reported."

There was a case in which although the US military notified the Japanese government of an incident, the Japanese government did not relay the news to local governments concerned. On April 9 in 2002, about 5,680 liters of fuel leaked from a tank. Data kept by the US

military stated that the incident "could pose a threat to public health and safety."

According to explanations by the Foreign Ministry and the Tokyo Regional Defense Facilities Administration Bureau on this case, the US military notified the government of the leak as reference information and was not based on the Joint Committee's agreement. They replied in response to the Tokyo metropolitan government's request for disclosure of information that they would properly respond and report even if it was just reference information.

There were cases in which local governments, even if informed of an incident, remain unable to cope with the situation.

Many pollution accidents have occurred at US military bases in Okinawa. Kadena Air Base suffered a jet fuel leak of about 8,700 liters in late May. The US military was aware of the leak on May 29, but it notified the Foreign Ministry about the incident two days later, and the ministry did not inform the Okinawa prefectural government of it until June 1, according to the prefectural government.

The prefectural government asked the US military to allow it to collect soil samples, but the US military declined the request, on the strength of its facility-management right specified in the SOFA. Okinawa officials entered the base twice, but they were just allowed to conduct visual checks. They said they had no alternative but

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to only watch US troops moving the soil to another location in the base.

Contamination status at Onna Communication Site in Onna Village was revealed for the first time after the site was returned to Japan.

In 1996, the year after the base was returned, 104 tons of mud containing 12 times larger amounts of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and other harmful substances than the allowable ones under the government's regulations were found. The US military has refused to take care of the contaminated mud, on the grounds that the SOFA does not require the US military to restore original state. The Japanese government has kept the mud in drums at the Air Self-Defense Force Onna Base.

The Tokyo government is eager to make Yokota Air Base an airport used by both the US military and Japanese civilians, as one of the campaign pledges by Governor Shintaro Ishihara.

Officials responsible for foreign and defense affairs of the two countries have discussed potential problems expected to surface if the plan is implemented and conditions since last October. Both governments plan to come up with a policy decision by this October.

The Tokyo metropolitan government had conducted a groundwater inspection in areas near the station until last fiscal year, following a leak of 68 kiloliters of aircraft fuel into the site of Yokota base in 1993. The government reached the conclusion that nothing abnormal was detected, without any health threat.

An official of the Tokyo government, though, commented regarding the leak in the military base: "It is difficult to estimate how seriously the soil in the entire base has been polluted. There will be no other way but for us to continue to urge the US military to give consideration to the ambient environments."

Yoichi Endo, former assembly member of Fussa City, which houses Yokota AB, and has engaged in base-monitoring activity, said that this case exposed the US military's little consideration to safety. He said: "The joint use plan involving commercial airlines that must give top priority to the safety-first principle should be considered in a cautious manner."

(8) Teaming up with GSDF: Base sharing to push for integration

Takashi Watanabe, Asahi Shimbun

The air was dry with the sun blazing down. The horizon was reddish-brown over the vast expanse of America's land in the wilderness. A tank that was brought in from Japan was rolling across the ground, firing a shell. In the sky overhead, an antitank helicopter hovered. The chopper then launched rockets.

The US Army has a field training ground in Yakima County, Washington. The training area, also known as the Yakima range, is situated about 200 kilometers southeast of the US Army's Fort Lewis base. At the Yakima range, the Ground Self-Defense Force conducted maximum-range live-fire training on Sept. 6-15, with the participation of about 340 GSDF members, including those from the

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GSDF Western Army. In Japan, there is no place for such full-scale live-fire training.

"We were given an environment where we could use firearms to the fullest." With this, Masatsugu Ono, who commands the GSDF 8th Artillery Regiment 3rd Battalion, thanked the US Army.

The US Army, however, did not only offer a training site in its cooperation with the GSDF. In the United States, the GSDF has annually conducted 16 training exercises. For this year's training, Ft. Lewis sent about 100 troops, including those from the 17th Fires Brigade, which is a modular field artillery unit of the US Army's 1st Corps, or I Corps ("eye core") for short, and which has state-of-the-art multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS). For the GSDF training, they served as 'stagehands' to give training advice, refuel vehicles and helicopters, put out underbrush fires, and provide water and food.

The GSDF training this time was commanded by Kazumichi Miyamoto, deputy commander of the 8th Division, a GSDF field unit based in Kumamoto City. "We trained until late at night," Miyamoto said, "and they also helped us until late at night." He added, "I take off my hat."

The US Army's 9th Corps (IX Corps) used to locate its headquarters on Camp Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture. Its headquarters was absorbed into the headquarters of I Corps in 1995. Since then, I Corps and the GSDF have annually conducted a bilateral joint command post exchange (CPX) drill in Japan or the United States, with their command staffs using computers.

The GSDF has posted officers to I Corps headquarters since 1996, as well as South Korea and Australia, to liaise with the US Army and coordinate training exercises, including live-fire drills at Yakima.

"The important thing is to share intelligence between trustworthy countries," I Corps Public Affairs Officer McDorman said. "For the United States," the I Corps spokesman added, "Japan is an important friend." One GSDF officer also said, "We meet and talk every day, and then we trust each other."

In the process of realigning the US military presence in Japan, I Corps will locate its headquarters on Camp Zama to command its forward-deployed troops. The GSDF will also move the headquarters of its Central Readiness Command (CRC) to Camp Zama by the end of fiscal 2012 from its current location at the GSDF's Asaka garrison that stretches over Saitama Prefecture and Tokyo. The Defense Ministry has earmarked approximately 1.5 billion yen in its budget estimate for fiscal 2008 to build facilities and billets at Zama.

Among those concerned with military affairs in Japan and the United States, this base sharing at Zama is seen as a symbol of bilateral cooperation. That is because Japan and the United States are expected to go ahead with their military integration further as I Corps and the CRC share the base for their respective commands.

On Sept. 14, US Army Brig. Gen. Donald Campbell, the deputy commanding general of I Corps, was also in the Yakima range to see

the GSDF's live-fire training for the day.

After the training, Campbell talked to each of the young GSDF

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members there and dined with GSDF officers. When the I Corps deputy commander was leaving on a helicopter, I asked him about the plan to set up a command of forward-deployed troops at Camp Zama.

"After the command of forward-deployed troops is located at Camp Zama, our two countries' bilateral relationship would be strengthened further," Campbell answered.

Note: This is the second of a three-part series.

SCHIEFFER